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Book Reviews

The Dramatic Values in Plautus. BY WILTON WALLACE BLANCKÉ.

Doctoral Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, 1918.

The germ of Doctor Blancké's idea seems to have been found in those Plautine critics, Teutonic and otherwise, who have burdened Plautus with such thorny crowns as moral elevation (or didactic tendencies), successful realism, good character drawing, plot structure, subtle wit, and refinement of diction. Of most of these incumbrances Blancké relieves his author. "If then we can place Plautus toward the bottom of the scale, we relieve him vastly of responsibility as a dramatist and of the necessity of adherence to verisimilitude."

Constructively, Doctor Blancké has supplied a "solvent" for all critical difficulties in regard to Plautus. His *aqua regia* has a simple formula. Plautus was a "fun-maker," pure and simple—and mostly simple. Plautus regarded his comedies "merely as a rack on which to hang witticisms" (equulei, perhaps?). Horseplay was the one desideratum. Plautus made no attempt to trim or fit the awkward conventions which he inherited from the Greeks. He reveled in these hand-me-downs, turning the worst side toward his audience; a patch to him was only less funny than a tear.

In support of the above-mentioned thesis Doctor Blancké considers the rude and boisterous character of the Roman audience, the importance of gestures and lively action on the Roman stage, and, at greatest length, the nature of Plautus' comic effects. Here his classification may seem artificial, but comic effects are a hard thing to sort and we are not sure that anyone could do better. The material grouped in the body of this dissertation is all interesting and conveniently assembled. That it proves anything new, we are unable to see. Perhaps we should except the author's theory that the *servus* or *parasitus currens* was avowedly a comic effect: "Consider the ludicrous spectacle of the rapidly moving legs and the flailing arms, with the actor's face turned toward the audience as he declaims sonorously of his haste to perform his vital errand, while making but a snail's progress." But we must remind Doctor Blancké that the chariot race in Ben Hur was, not so long ago, esteemed a triumph of realism. Doctor Blancké does not postulate a treadmill on the Roman stage.

In closing, our author admits that Plautus does at times fall into certain felicities. But that these are in any way germane to his purpose is emphatically denied. Judgments on individual plays may prove interesting. "The *Casina*, uproarious and lewd as it is, becomes excruciatingly funny if the mind is open

to appreciating humor in the broadest spirit." "I believe we may safely call the *Trinumus* the least Plautine of Plautine plays except the *Captivi*, and it is by no means as good a work. The *Trinumus* is crowded with interminable padded dialogue, tiresome moral preachments, and possesses a weakly motivated plot; a veritable 'Sunday-school play.'" The dissertation is brought up to date with numerous comparisons from vaudeville and derogatory references to German scholarship. As regards technique, it would be unfair not to accord Doctor Blancké the same license which he allows his author.

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Musa Americana. Patriotic Songs in Latin Set to Popular Melodies, with English text. By ANTHONY F. GEYSER. Chicago: Loyola University Press. Pp. 31. Single copies, 15 cents, postpaid; 6 or more copies, 12 cents each.

Carmina Latina. Selected and edited by ROY C. FLICKINGER. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 14. Single copies, 11 cents postpaid; 6 or more copies, 8 cents each.

We are often asked by Latin teachers where popular Latin songs may be obtained suitable for the uses of various occasions. It has not always been easy to answer this question, since the material available has been rather scanty and scattered. In 1914 Calvin S. Brown edited a volume entitled *Latin Songs*, Ancient, Mediaeval, and Modern, with Music, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons. This was a very useful volume, but it did not fill the need of those teachers who desired to place a considerable number of copies of songs in the hands of their students. The publication of the two booklets named above will fill this need.

Musa Americana contains twelve songs: "The Star Spangled Banner" (*Vexillum Stellatum*), "America," "To Our Victorious Soldiers" (*Ad Milites e Bello Redeuntes*), "Columbia, Beloved, We Hail Thee" (*Columbia, Salveto, Dilecta*), "Hail to Thee, My Dearest Country" (*Salve, Patria Amata*), "Merrily, Merrily We'll Sing, Boys" (*Age, Cari Comites*), "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (*Rei Publicae Paeon Militaris*), "My Country" (*Patria Mea*), "Just Before the Battle, Mother" (*Ante Pugnam, Mater Mea*), "Hurrah for Our Banner" (*Ad Arma*), "Hail Columbia, Happy Land" (*O Columbia, Felix Es*), "The Minstrel Boy" (*Vates Iuvenis*).

Carmina Latina was first made public and used at the sixteenth meeting of the Chicago Classical Club in February last by Professor Flickinger, who was at the same time president of the club and editor of the booklet. In connection with each song, the history both of the original and of the translation is given. The Latin version only of the songs is given. They are as follows: "America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," *Adeste Fideles*, "Lead, Kindly